Lord Caitanya's Civil Disobedience Movement

Introduction

A Merchant enters the stage and mimes the selling of his wares. A thief comes up from behind him, holds him at the point of a knife, steals his money and knocks him down.

Next, a drunkard staggers on with his bottle in hand and collapses.

Finally, a cow enters and peacefully grazes. A butcher approaches with an axe and knocks down the cow.

Nimai Pandit, displaying great love and compassion, approaches the three areas of decadence and revives the battered and bewildered characters, who resolve their differences by embraces and dandavats.

Scene One The Palace of the Chand Kazi

(The kazi, Muslim Governor, is sitting on his throne and three Smarta Brahmanas stand before him. The kazi's servant stands to his right side.)

1st Smarta: Chand Kazi, there is something peculiar going on in the town of Navadvip and if something is not done about it soon, then I don't know what will happen! It is this chanting of Hare Krsna not that there is anything, per se, wrong with chanting the names
of God! Of course, occasionally we do observe a religious ritual by singing and dancing and playing musical instruments, but all within reason! That is part of our Hindu tradition, but it is the way in which it is done, the place, the time and the people who are doing it that disturbs us. Do you realize that untouchables are chanting these mantras? This alone will bring disaster to the town!

Kazi: How is that?

2nd Smarta: Let me explain, Your Greatness. Please excuse me for saying this, Your Excellency, Chand Kazi, but since you are Muslim, you may not be familiar with our Hindhu theology and procedures.

Kazi: Go on.

2nd Smarta: Mantras and Vedic hymns are to be uttered only by the higher classes, especially the brahmanas. If the religious fanatics start giving these mantras to the untouchables, then this sinful act will bring great misfortune to the entire district! The karma will be overwhelming - famine, disease, pestilence!!

3rd Smarta: Right now, our entire Hindu religion is being undermined because, according to our scriptures, mantras are the most powerful representation of God. If these mantras are distributed everywhere, then the power of the mantras will be lost.

Kazi: Who are these brahmanas that are instigating this?

1st Smarta: It is one brahmana mainly, the son of Jagannath Misra.

2nd Smarta: Nimai Pandit is His name, although some call Him Gaurahari, or Caitanya, Your Excellency.

Kazi: Hmmmm, Gaurahari? And how do His followers conduct this chanting?

3rd Smarta: Let me tell you - it is really bizarre to see! You see, when we Hindus keep a nightlong vigil for worshiping the gods and goddesses, playing on musical instruments, dancing and chanting are fitting customs, but this loud chanting that goes on deafens our ears!! They do it all different times, and at night we can't get any sleep! All night we hear "Haribol! Haribol!"

2nd Smarta: Sometimes they become absolutely hysterical - jumping in the air, laughing, rolling on the ground and, crying loudly, they embrace one another! This is going on between mixed castes! It is total insanity.

Kazi: Gentlemen, you are all Hindus by birth, I am just
surprised that you have come here to complain against others who practice the same Hindu religion as you do.

1st Smarta: Your honor, we are real Hindus but this Nimai Pandit has introduced the Sankirtan Movement, which we have never heard of from our scriptures.

2nd Smarta: At night, we can't get any sleep, we are always kept awake. He has spoiled the Hindu religion! He has gotten the lower classes of men to chant the Hare Krsna mantra again and again. In this way, if the common men take to chanting, the power of God's name will be polluted!

3rd Smarta: This Nimai Pandit was formerly a very nice boy, but since He has returned from Gaya, He conducts Himself differently, Your Reverence. Now, He loudly sings all kinds of songs clapping, playing drums and hand cymbals and making tumultuous sounds that deafen our ears! He sometimes dances, sings, laughs, cries, falls down and rolls on the ground and jumps in the air!

He has made all the people practically mad by always performing congregational chanting! He used to be a fine boy, a teacher of Grammar, but now -well, it must be something He eats, Your Excellency.

1st Smarta: I also suspect that they drink wine and womanize while they chant in their different dwellings!

Kazi: (surprised) Is that so!?

1st Smarta: Sir, you are the ruler of this district; whether Hindu or Muslim, everyone is under your protection. We are begging you to stop this frivolous chanting and make Gaurahari leave the town immediately.

2nd Smarta: Please make this Nimai Pandit leave town before it is deserted!
(Two Mohammedan Meat Eaters enter in an angry mood, and they greet the kazi.)

1st Meateater: (bowing, with hand gesture from forehead) A salaam alaikum.

Kazi: (with same gesture) Alaikum a salaam.
(to the Meat Eaters) Please excuse me for one moment, my friends. (to Smarta Brahmins) Anyway, gentlemen, I sympathize with you, but after all, the chanting is mainly going on in the private houses of the Vaishnavas and, as long as they keep it to themselves in that way, I really can't object too much. Now, good day, gentlemen!
(This reply doesn't please the Smartas but they start to leave, then loiter to hear what the Meat-Eaters have to say.)

1st Meateater: Sir, this time the Hindus have gone too far! They are becoming too bold. If you don't curb them, the King will punish you!

Kazi: What do you mean? What has happened?

1st Meateater: What has happened?! The worst possible thing! The Hindus are starting an uprising!

Kazi: What! That's impossible! Why, ever since the days of the conquering Muslim hero, Vaktiyara Khiliji, the Hindus in Bengal have been severely suppressed by us! Practically, none of them have been able to practice their religion freely. In fact, they have almost forgotten their own religious principles, just like those two Hindus who were just here.

2nd Meateater: Well, from what we saw today in the market places and streets of Navadvip, it appears that they are fast to remember those principles. Yes, today in the market place we saw the Hindus gathered, chanting the names of their God. They were making a tumultuous sound and seemed completely fearless. We hear that it is the work of this One they call Gaura Hari!

Kazi: You mean to say that they were actually performing their chanting in the streets? Why, this is amazing! They've always been such a bunch of cowards, practically like sheep under our thumbs. How can this be?

1st Meateater: You had better ask yourself how to stop it before the king hears of this.

2nd Meateater: You know how cruel he is, if he hears of this he will have your head for being too lenient with the Hindus!
(Both Smarta Brahmins have come back into the room after hearing the news.)

1st Smarta: So now, my dear kazi, it seems as though Nimai's men are no longer content with chanting in their own homes. I think that it is time for you to put a stop to this once and for all!!

Kazi: (brooding) Yes, I think you're right. Tell me, where could I find Gaurahari? At the Misra's residence?

2nd Smarta: Perhaps at the home of Srivasa Thakur, Your Mercifulness. That is where they chant all night long.

Kazi: Have no fear, I will take care of this matter. You should expect no more disturbances, from hereon.

All: Thank you, thank you!

Scene Two - The House of Srivasa Thakur

(Loud kirtan is going on at the house of Srivas Thakur. Lord Caitanya is not present. The kazi arrives and shouts for them to stop, but they do not take notice of him due to the kirtan. Then he violently breaks one of the drums, and the devotees stop the kirtan, shocked and dismayed.)

Kazi:(loudly) For so long you did not follow the regulative principles of the

Hindu religion but now you are following them with great enthusiasm. May I know by whose strength you are doing so? Who is responsible for this? (silence) Where is Srivasa Thakur? (Srivasa Thakur steps forward.)

Srivasa Thakur: Here, sir.

Kazi: Where is Gaurahari, the son of Jagannath Misra?

Srivasa Thakur: He is not here at present.

Kazi: Then give Him my message - I want no more of this chanting in the streets of Navadvip; it is a nuisance.
No one should perform Sankirtan on the streets of the city! Today, I am excusing the offense and returning home. I will leave this place knowing that I am perfectly understood.

Srivasa Thakur: Yes, of course, I will tell Him.

Kazi: And, you may add this - if, in the future, I shall see someone performing this loud chanting, I shall not only confiscate all of his property but I shall also convert him into a Mohammedan by forcing him to eat meat!!!
(With that the kazi exits and the devotees stand around very dejected.)

Srivasa Thakur: There is nothing like the Name of Lord Hari for freeing the world from its bonds of misconception and sin. This chanting has arisen like the sun, which dispels all darkness and dissipates illusion. It is sad that few people can appreciate the light and warmth that comes from the Holy Names.

Devotee: Srivasa Thakur, what will we do now?

Srivasa Thakur: We will take the problem up with our Lord, Sri Gaurahari. Let's all go to Him, immediately.
(They leave.)

Scene Three - Lord Caitanya's Room

(The Supreme Lord, Gaurahari, is speaking, other devotees listen attentively or sing responsively to a Bengali Bhajan.)

Srivasa Thakur: O Gaurahari, we have some unfortunate news.

Caitanya: What can be unfortunate, Srivasa?

Srivasa Thakur: We were conducting our chanting as usual,in my home, when we were interrupted by a very angry Chand Kazi.

2nd Devotee: (brings forward the broken mrdanga. He hands the broken mrdanga to the Lord, Who looks at it with concern.)

Caitanya: The kazi has done this?

2nd Devotee: (nods sadly) Yes.

Srivasa: He said if we don't give up our chanting, he would take away all our property and make us into Mohammedans!!

Caitanya: Nonsense! You are all eternal devotees of Lord Krsna. Go and perform Sankirtan! Tonight, I shall kill all the Mohammedans!!
(The devotees begin a timid kirtan, looking apprehensively about for the kazi. Lord Caitanya watches with great concern.They all leave. Music)

Scene Four Lord Caitanya's Room

Nityananda: I would go to every house in the Hindu section and when the householder came to his door, I would fall down at his feet and cry,"Please, I beg you! Just always chant the Holy Names Hare Krsna and depend upon Him!" Hardly a gentleman refused me and so, in this way, many fallen souls were saved today!

Caitanya: Jai Sri Krsna! This is wonderful! Please keep this door to door program going! Now, tell me, how is the chanting party doing, is it still going out daily into the market places and streets of the city?

Haridas: My dear Lord, the chanting party is going out as You ordered, but the devotees' minds are full of anxiety. Ever since the kazi came and broke the drum, the devotees have been afraid, and so, they cannot perform the Sankirtan very blissfully!

Caitanya: I see. Then you should immediately call all of the citizens together. I shall personally perform Sankirtan in each and every town this evening! Therefore, you should all decorate the city very nicely.

We will not be discouraged. We cannot be tolerant of those who try to obstruct the chanting. We will fight back, but not by lifting a single weapon. Armed with karatals and drums, we will hold a kirtan with a very large chanting party. Torches will light our way and the Holy Names will be our

shield. Summon Advaita Acharya and Haridas Thakur. We will cover every street, every nook and corner of Navadvip and reach our destiny - the palace of Chand Kazi.

All: (very blissfully) Jai Mahaprahu! Hari Bol! Hari Bol!

Scene Five - Lord Caitanya's Civil Disobedience Movement

(kirtan tape plays in background)

Caitanya: How many people have come for the kirtan?

Srivas: By your command, at least one hundred thousand will join us before we reach the house of the kazi.

Caitanya: Jai! Hari Bol! I shall give everyone protecton. Let us see what kind of kazi comes to stop our kirtan now!
(Lord Caitanya begins a kirtan and the party moves out of view. When they come out again, their ranks have swelled. If possible, they should hold a few torches. Several tapes of kirtans should be played in background to indicate that other parties are converging on the kazi's house.)

Caitanya: Do not disturb this respectable gentleman's property. We have come for friendly talks. I will sit here by the door and you older men go and inform the kazi that I have come to converse with him.

Scene Six - The Muslim Governor's Office

(Kirtan is heard offstage as Kazi enters)

Kazi: (to servant) Can you get me some milk?

Servant: Milk, sir? I could get you something a little harder ...

Kazi: Milk. I understand it calms one's nerves. I've had a most trying day much to consider

Servant: Alrighty, then - I'll go find you some milk, sir.
(Servant leaves. Kazi paces back and forth. An Orderly on the staff of the Kazi enters. Servant returns with milk and cups.)

Kazi: (to Orderly) Here, take this milk.

Orderly: I don't drink milk.

Kazi: It calms the nerves. (hands Orderly a glass of milk) Go on, try it.
(They both drink milk.)

Orderly: It does calm the nerves! Hmmmm

Kazi: (kirtan is louder) Now, what happened?

Orderly: That's them again - that's the chanting!
(looks out the window with Chand Kazi)
They're coming this way! Do you think they are coming to see us?

Kazi: Probably.

Orderly: There are thousands of them! Maybe they will just pass by and leave us alone. Oh, I can't look!
(He squeezes his eyes shut and trembles.) Are they passing by?

Kazi: It doesn't look like it.
(The Orderly opens his eyes.)

Orderly: O Allah, they're trampling over your garden!

Kazi: Oh no! I see them coming! Roaring and angry! Guards! Protect the walls! I must hide! Oh, Lord! They are breaking down the walls and destroying the gardens!
You greet them at the door.
(Kazi retreats to end of stage, as if hiding.)

Orderly: Me!?

Kazi: I'll greet them if the noise subsides.
(Kazi disappears. Srivas Thakur and others knock on the door to the kazi's palace.)

Orderly: (answers door) Hello, you're not looking for the Kazi, are you? Oh, I'm sorry but he's not here. Good day.
(He shuts the door. The devotees knock again. Orderly answers again.) I told you

Srivasa: We come in peace. Please summon the Kazi. Our Nimai Pandit wishes to debate with him. He will not leave until He sees the Kazi.

(Kazi approaches Srivasa Thakur. The elder devotees return with the kazi, who appears very afraid and reluctant. Lord Caitanya calms the crowd and stops the kirtan.)

Caitanya: (in a friendly way) Good evening, Chand Kazi, I am Caitanya.

Kazi: Namaste, Sadhuji!

Caitanya: Sir, I have come to your house as a guest, but upon seeing me, you hid yourself in your room. What kind of etiquette is this?

Kazi: (defensively) You came to my house in a very angry mood. I did not come to meet You immediately, just to pacify You. But, now that You are pacified, we can talk freely. Actually, You are just like my nephew, because Your grandfather, Nilambhara Cakravarti, was just like an uncle to me in the village where I was a boy. If a nephew is angry, his uncle should be tolerant and similarly, when an uncle commits an offense, the nephew should not take it very seriously.

Caitanya: You are quite right, my dear "Uncle." I have just come to your home to ask some questions about the Muslin faith.

Kazi: And You are welcome here! Now, tell me just what is on Your mind?
(The servant and orderly bring mats ab\nd they both sit.)

Scene Seven - The Debate

Caitanya: My dear "uncle", You drink cow's milk, therefore the cow is like your mother. The bull produces grains for your maintenance, therefore the bull is like you father. So tell me, what kind of religion is this you practice that allows you to kill your mother and father and eat them?

Kazi: Why, just as You have Your scriptures, we have ours, known as the Holy Koran. In the Koran, there is a regulation for killing cows and if such killing is done under the guidance of scripture, there is no sin.

Caitanya: No! The Vedas clearly say that cows should not be killed. Therefore, the Hindus do not engage in cow killing. However, there is a Vedic injunction which says that if a person is able to revive a living entity, then he can kill it and bring it back to life for experimental purposes. Therefore, the great sages sometimes killed animals and brought them back

to life by chanting the Vedic hymns, just to prove the power of the Vedas. But now, there are no brahmanas with such powers and so, in this age, such arts are strictly forbidden.

In this age of Kali, five acts are forbidden: the offering of a cow in sacrifice, the offering of a horse in sacrifice, the acceptance of the order of sannyasa, the offering of oblations of flesh to the forefathers and a man's begetting children by his brother's wife.

Since you Mohammedans can not bring a dead animal back to life, you are responsible for killing that animal. Therefore, you are going to hell; there is no way for your deliverance. Cow killers are condemned to rot in hell for as many thousands of years as there are hairs on the body of the cow they kill.

Kazi: There are many such mistakes in our scriptures. Their compilers, not knowing the essence of knowledge, gave orders against all reason and argument.

Caitanya: My dear, uncle, I wish to ask you another question. Recently, in your city, there is always congregational chanting of the Holy Name going on. As a Mohammedans magistrate, you were at first opposed to the Hindus but now you do not do anything to stop them. When you broke the mrdanga drum, you made some threats but when the chanting continued on the streets, you did not carry them out. I cannot understand why this change has come over you.

Kazi: Kindly listen, O Gaura Hari! Please come to a private place, I shall then explain.

Caitanya: Do not be afraid of these men, they are all My confidential associates, speak frankly.

Kazi: (a little hesitant) Well, when I went to the Hindu's street, broke the drum and forbade the congregational chanting, that very night I had a terrible dream. I saw a greatly fearful lion, roaring very loudly, His body like a human being and His face like a lion!

(The spotlight shifts to a second scene where someone dressed to look like the kazi is lying down. Suddenly, Lord Nrsinghdev appears, roaring loudly. He places his nails on the chest of the "kazi.")

Nrsinghadev: I shall immediately split your chest just as you broke the mrdanga drum! You have forbidden the performance of My congregational chanting, therefore, I must destroy you!

(Kazi 2 closes his eyes and trembles.)

I have defeated you just to teach you a lesson. On that day, you did not create a very great disturbance, therefore, I have excused you and not taken your life. But, if you perform such activities again, I shall not be tolerant. At that time, I shall kill you, your entire family and all the meat-eaters!! (roars)
(The spotlight shifts back to the scene of the kazi and Lord Caitanya conversing.)

Kazi: After saying this, the lion left, but I was very much afraid of Him! Just see the marks of His nails on my heart!
(Kazi rips open his shirt to show the long, red nail marks of Lord Nrsinghadev. Everyone is amazed except for Lord Caitanya.) I did not speak to anyone about this, but the next day, one of my orderlies came to see me:
(spotlight shifts to second scene where Kazi 2 sits in deep thought.)

Orderly: Your honor, this morning I saw the Hindus again chanting in the street against your order but when I attempted to stop them, suddenly flames struck my face! My beard was burned and there were blisters on my cheeks. Others had the same experience.

Kazi 2: (fearful) Do not try to stop the chanting anymore! Just return to your homes and sit down. (orderly exits)

1st Meateater: Hari! Hari! (throwing his hands up in anguish) Now there will always be unrestricted chanting of Krsna! Krsna! In the streets! The religion of the Hindus will increase unlimitedly. KRSNA! Krsna! That's all we can hear anymore!

2nd Meateater: We are becoming deaf from this Hari Hari! Krsna! Hari Bol!
(He chants and the other Meateater joins him.)

Both: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Kazi 2: Enough! Enough! I know that the Hindus chant Hari and Krsna, for those are the Names of their God. But, why do you two Mohammedan Meateaters also chant?

1st Meateater: (embarrassed) I don't know! I used to imitate them and joke with them but now my tongue can't stop saying Hari! Hari! Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna! We have no desire to say it but we cannot help ourselves! I don't

know what kind of magic these Hindus practice! I don't know what to do!

2nd Meateater: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare

1st Meateater: Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare!

Kazi 2: (comforting them) There now, don't worry, it will
probably pass in time. Just go home and rest. I'm sure you will forget these names before long.
(to himself) What will happen next? It seems that this Hare Krsna Movement cannot be stopped!
(The Meat Eaters leave, still chanting. The spotlight shifts to the conversation between Lord Caitanya and the kazi.)

Kazi: I know now that You are the Supreme Lord, Narayana Himself.

Caitanya: (Pleased, Lord Caitanya touches the kazi.) The chanting of the Holy Name from your mouth has performed a wonder. It has nullified the reactions of your many sins. Now, you have become supremely pure.

Kazi: Only by Your mercy have my bad intentions completely vanished. Kindly favor me so that my devotion will always be fixed upon You.

Caitanya: I wish to beg you for one favor in charity. You must
pledge that this Sankirtan Movement will never again be stopped by you, at least not in the district of Nadia.

Kazi: To as many descendants as take birth in my dynasty in the future, I give this grave admonition: No one shall check this Sankirtan Movement!

All: Hari Bol! Hari Bol! (kirtan)